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Article

Teaching History through Music: A Practical Approach for Content Courses

Etienne MARCEAU

Introduction

Content-based education is getting momentum in Japanese universities as a way to offer both knowledge in a field and second language instruction. Traditionally, English education in Japan has been seen more as a goal than as a tool to learn information or to communicate with others. While making language the main focus of a course allows a deeper linguistic analysis, explicit knowledge of the form of a language has hardly any use for students outside of the classroom (and after graduation). After spending a four-year degree mostly learning the English language, Japanese graduates have little more to offer and are not very competitive with the job market. This is problematic in a global context where English is not the information needed but the tool used to communicate the information in any field.

In university, aware that students with insufficient language skills cannot simply be thrown into a course designed for fluent speakers, a gradual (but demanding) approach is necessary to bring students up to a level where they can handle content in an all-English environment. Content-based approaches cover a wide spectrum of different degrees of language instruction, also referred to as

Content and Language Integrated learning (CLIL), a term attributed to David Marsh (1994). It ranges from a traditional foreign language course with a strong focus on form (grammar) that uses some topics to increase students' interests, to a "pure" content approach that is comparable to a regular course offered in an English-speaking university. CLIL has been the subject of numerous studies in the European Union because of its use in a multilingual context (European Commission, 2002). This article will make an attempt at using CLIL to bridge students between traditional EFL courses and an immersion experience.

The case study presented here is a course in American culture, namely American music and history. This article does not intend to prove the benefits of listening to music while performing another task, also known as the "Mozart Effect". Rather, the idea is that music and history can enhance each other when taught together to second-language students in an environment that resembles the one of an English-speaking university.

Rationale

The primary objective of this course is to prepare students who will study abroad in the near future (both short and long stays) to be able to handle regular courses in English-speaking universities. While some students may attend a special "bridging" or "preparatory" program offered to students whose English skills are not high enough to join regular courses, many will take regular classes and will find themselves in a *sink or swim* situation. In that case, the style of teaching and what is expected from students abroad can be challenging for Japanese students, especially if the language constitutes an additional barrier.

With this in mind, the idea for a course that would focus on the content while being accessible and motivating started to emerge. Reflecting on my own experience as a French speaker learning English at an English university, I tried to understand those successful conditions: when my English skills were insufficient, as a music major, my understanding of music would provide me

with the context clues necessary to understand the professors' or maestro's explanations. The role that music played in my language learning experience was so benevolent (since regular classes and rehearsals offered no language support for second language learners) that I thought of recreating this context in my class. Music would be the crutch to support students, providing a relief from the monotonous lectures and giving students a chance to make connections between language and music. The clear social and historical context that music offers has potential in a course designed for language learners (Brewer, 1995; Wesche & Skehan, 2002).

Many foreign English teachers in Japan have a background as an ALT (Assistant Language Teacher) in public schools, or as an instructor in English conversation schools (*Eikaiwa)*. They often use music to: review a grammar point; show how grammar is used in a sentence; provide an example of authentic language; expose students to foreign culture; provide entertainment or a recess between two demanding activities. These ways of using music offer varying degrees of success and provide limited educational benefits: the lyrics are often beyond the students' capacity to understand, and authentic language does not necessarily mean common, or a good example of everyday language, or even grammatically correct. The language used in popular music is most likely casual, and might not reflect the kind of language taught and assessed in class. In the end, the songs used in class might offer little to no connection with the course, so there might be no real purpose to use music in this situation. Of course music is fun, and because it breaks the monotony of a lesson it plays a role in motivating the students (Hidi, S., Renninger, K.A., Krapp, A., 2004). Many of us see music in a lesson as a way to provide a lighter activity; on the other hand, it is possible to tap more into the different resources that music can provide. Teachers should make a meaningful and pedagogical usage of music in their daily practice.

During the first lesson of this American culture course, students took a music appreciation survey. Its results confirmed the need to teach not only language and

cultural facts (to be memorised, then retrieved for the test, then forgotten), but also to guide students towards opening their minds to a wider range of influences and towards making their own informed opinion. A large number of students, despite being English majors, confessed only listening to music sung in Japanese, mostly j-pop. A few students who do listen to music sung in English answered "Disney songs", and a few rare exceptions answered "pop stars" like Justin Bieber, Bruno Mars, Katy Perry, etc. The lack of diversity in musical taste and the lack of interest toward foreign music in general was disappointing considering that the students are English majors. Therefore, exposing the students to different musical influences became a secondary goal in this course, on top of providing an interesting content course taught in English.

What the Research Says

As previously stated, the argument here is not to prove the benefits of listening to music while performing a task (listening to classical music to improve creative writing, for example). Of course music can serve a teacher in many ways, from warm-ups to classroom management, but the goal here is to see how music can enhance learning in a content-based course. Studies on the use of music as a medium of instruction are scarce, possibly because of the difficulty to find appropriate music to relate to content in different fields. In addition, perhaps the circumstances here are somehow unique: a teacher who has learned English through music, using music to teach EFL in a history course. Nonetheless, important factors such as student engagement and different ways of conveying the information have been examined.

The original inspiration to use music to facilitate learning, on top of my own learning experience, was Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Intelligence is split into different 'modalities' and sensory skills rather than one unique ability, namely memorisation (Gardner, 1983). Aware that Gardner's theory has faced some criticism such as a lack or empirical evidence (Allix, 2000)

and that the validity of testing intelligence and its components is still debatable (Waterhouse, 2006), the idea is not to restrict learners to a unique ability (or to label them), but to experiment with different activities that addresses the whole spectrum of learners' aptitudes. For example, using video clips (instead of only audio recordings) when providing musical examples will stimulate both students' musical-rhythmic and visual-spatial intelligences. When teaching in the Japanese public education system, I witnessed too many occurrences when students were expected to fit a single way of learning rather than recognising individual talent and aptitudes. This musical approach is not meant to be a panacea, but rather a chance for students to experiment with a different class dynamic.

Music helps learning because it provides contextual clues and presents the information differently. Pauline Gibbons refers to this as *message abundancy* (p.44, 2015), an example of pedagogical scaffolding; by presenting visual and musical examples of the content, students have more than one chance to access the information. Another parallel with music is an orchestra rehearsal that, while resembling a teacher-centered classroom, is a demonstration of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development; the difference between what a learner can learn independently versus with the help of a mentor (Vygotsky, 1978). In a more traditional classroom setting, this means that if a student cannot understand the teacher's presentation, then the teacher should become aware of the situation and provide an alternative medium.

An obvious reason teachers play music in their classroom is to establish a stimulating learning atmosphere. It can improve concentration and memory (Brewer, 1995; Wesche & Skehan, 2002) if used as background music, creating a constant "noise" that can cover up other distracting noises (teacher's speech from the adjacent classroom, someone playing with their pencil, etc.). However, the effect of background music can backfire and disrupt concentration if students enjoy the song more than the task they have to do! For this reason, instrumental music can be effective, at the risk of being a little monotonous.

Berk (2008) advocates that teachers should not limit the usage of music to energise a class; music has the potential to influence teaching styles and methods altogether. Of course motivation is a deciding factor, because when students are active and interested in what they are learning, they make better connections with other elements (Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, 2004), and it is more stimulating for the teacher as well. With this generation of Internet and smartphone users (also known as *digital natives* (Prensky, 2001)), grabbing and keeping students' attention constitutes a real challenge for more traditional teachers who are used to a lecture format. Technology in the classroom has been getting a lot of attention recently, but unfortunately it has become the end rather than the mean for some. Teachers who have just started using technology in their lessons (Prensky calls them *digital immigrants* (2001)) might be impressed by this revolution in their teaching method and expect a strong impact on students, but for the digital natives sitting in class, it is nothing more than *another* video. Therefore, there must be a purpose behind the use of technology.

Masters in the art of getting our attention, advertising companies have long understood the power of upbeat music combined with short, catchy segments (Berk, 2008, p.49). Commercials on TV are repeated ad nauseam, and their jingles (a mix of simple music and simple slogan) stay in our head for years. Maybe not everybody has a musical ear, but many people can remember and sing dozens of company jingles and slogans. In psychology, those concepts are called encoding (how information is "written" in our memory) and retrieval (recalling the information) (Lightbown, 2014, pp.55–56). The same goes with TV programs for children; songs are used to teach children how to count or memorize the alphabet. The *Alphabet Song* is itself based on *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, which is based on *Ah! vous dirai-je, maman*, an old French children song. It is why many mnemonic tricks involve songs or nursery rhymes; we can remember full songs but rarely full texts. Many countries in the world produce TV programs and advertisements as such, even teaching foreign languages to

children, yet many teachers do not apply these principles in second language education.

Finally, it is hoped that this course will have an effect on improving both listening skills and content knowledge. Moriyoshi (2010) suggests that in order to fully benefit from CLIL, students and teachers should be aware of the goals of the course, both regarding language and content. While goals were mentioned at the beginning of the course, students most likely forgot over time, and could have benefitted from regular reminders. If students are sold on the idea of CLIL, it is more likely to give positive results (Hanna, 2002, p.73).

Study Case: An American Story

There are two different ways of approaching a course about music and history like this one. The first way is to go through each decade and address historical, social, and musical events of that period. The second approach is to visit each genre of music and to learn about its evolution through history, its social influences, significant contributors, etc. The first approach focuses on history, while the second focuses on music. An historical approach presents the challenge that students would have to deal with several genres of music at once (for example, a lesson on the 1970s would have to cover rock, pop, disco, fusion jazz, Motown, hip-hop, etc.), which can only be confusing. The second approach (focus on each genre of music), on the other hand, would mean restarting the historical continuum each lesson. Moreover, taking each genre of music independently seems a bit artificial since they evolved influencing and being influenced by each other (for example, rock n' roll uses a blues chord progression, the backbeat inherited from gospel, the guitar from country music, etc.). In the end, I decided that each lesson would be dedicated to a decade of American history, and besides non-musical historical events, the focus would be on the most meaningful musical genre(s) of the decade. Hopefully this will be interesting and simple enough for students to follow and get a good grasp of the content.

Overview of the Course: Origins and Gospel

The first lesson is dedicated to the origins of the United States: Native Americans, Europeans, the Independence War, the Slave Trade, etc. Racial discrimination and the contributions of African-Americans are recurrent themes throughout this course since they are ubiquitous in American history and music. Work songs and gospel music are used to illustrate the connection between early American history and music. In a speech at the White House, Barack Obama explains the origins and the importance of gospel music: "even though they were often forbidden to read, or write, or even speak freely, slaves were permitted to sing" (2015). Gospel songs were also used to convey information, playing an important role in the Underground Railroad toward safety and ultimately freedom. Gospel is "the music that influenced all the other genres" continues Obama. This is therefore the logical beginning of this course. Examples of songs include *John the Revelator* as a classic example of gospel music (call and answer, hand clapping, backbeat, participation from the audience, etc.), *Follow the Drinking Gourd* to illustrate the Underground Railroad, or Shirley Caesar singing *Sweeping Through the City* with passion and energy for Obama at the White House (PBS, 2015).

The 1950s: Rock n' Roll

Meaningful historical events of the 1950s include the post-World War II economic expansion, the Civil Rights Movement, the beginning of the Cold War, the opening of Disneyland (a favourite with the students), etc. Musically, rock n' roll, influenced by gospel, blues, and country music, is the dominant genre. Elvis Presley becomes the "King", a veritable cultural icon of the 20th century. Electric guitar becomes the main instrument, and young couples dance on its syncopated beat without listening much to the lyrics about parties and young love. Soon there will be a transition into rock music, with a strong influence from the United Kingdom, unfortunately beyond the scope of this course.

Rocking in the 60s

The 1960s saw so much in terms of social and musical novelty that it would be impossible to cover it all in one lesson. Segregation (especially school segregation) is an important topic again, with the musical *Hairspray* (2007) illustrating those racial tensions. The musical introduces the Civil Rights Movement, with which students should already be familiar thanks to the famous *I Have a Dream* speech of Martin Luther King Jr. Next, the Vietnam war is possibly what has influenced artists the most in the 1960s. The number of songs that have been written in protest against that war is endless. If rock n' roll was music to dance to, rock music of the 60s and 70s will be used to convey social messages. Creedence Clearwater Revival (CCR) made a hit with *Fortunate Son*, a difficult but beautiful text which explains that in America, sons of wealthy families can avoid going to war.

Some folks are born made to wave the flag
Oh, they're red, white and blue
And when the band plays "Hail to the Chief"
Oh, they point the cannon at you, Lord
It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no senator's son, son
It ain't me, it ain't me; I ain't no fortunate one, no (CCR, 1969)

An expression often associated with the Vietnam War is "rich man's war, poor man's fight". For the students, this example of anti-establishment culture is a trigger for a conversation about social inequalities, especially if related to Japan. Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On?* shows another kind of message, this time an artist's call for peace. Last in this decade is the Space Race including the moon landing (1969), which launched a technological revolution. Interestingly, it did not make an impact on American artists as much as on British pop singers; space exploration is ubiquitous in David Bowie's *Space Oddity* (1969), *Life on*

Mars (1971), and *Starman* (1972), without forgetting Elton John's *Rocket Man* (1972).

The Fecund 1970s: Rock, Pop, Disco, Motown

The 1970s are upbeat musically and more positive than the 1960s. Disco became the night club's answer to rock music as a catchy dancing genre. A classic example that comes to mind is Gloria Gaynor's *I Will Survive*, which has all the ingredients of disco music: four uniformly accented beats, a dancing tempo with an open high-hat on the up-beat, a prominent melodic bass line (sometimes in octaves), violins, etc. Disco is still used in TV commercials and still influences artists today, for example Daft Punk and Bruno Mars in the West, while AKB48's hit *Koi Suru Fortune Cookie* (2014) proves that disco is not dead in Japan either. As an example, many students have heard *Can't Take my Eyes off You* in a cellphone TV commercial. The song is a pedagogical example of a disco (or pop) song since each instrument comes in one after another and each sections of the song are clearly distinct. Next, a key figure of pop music for the next 20 years, Michael Jackson became famous with his siblings as the Jackson 5, who will dominate the charts from 1965 until the late 1980s. The Jackson 5 sang soul, disco, and funk music, all ingredients of what will be called Motown, after the name of an African-American-owned music label. Motown played an important role in the integration of African-American music into the main stream of pop music, and as disco, often featured African-American women as lead singers (Walser, 1998, p.372).

1980s: Pop, Classic Rock

After the disco party is over, the 1980s are a bit sobering. People start opening to the world and become aware of global problems. The world learns about the "new" disease AIDS, and the last decade of the Cold War keeps people worried about a possible annihilating nuclear war. A devastating famine in Ethiopia

(1983–1985) mobilises international relief aid, including Harry Belafonte who has an idea to record a song with many famous singers and to use the profits to help Ethiopia (and Africa in general). Two singers are assigned with writing the song: Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie. This is how the hit song *We Are the World* was born (Taraborrelli, 2009, p.341). Other emblematic pop singers of the 1980s include Madonna, the New Kids on the Block, Prince, while rock artists like Bruce Springsteen and Bon Jovi are favourites. In *discothèques* (nightclubs), electronic music is replacing disco, and DJs are becoming the norm instead of live bands.

1990s: Grunge, Punk, Electro, and Power Ballads

The 1990s actually start in November 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall, indicator of the decade to come: the reunification of Germany, the fall of the Soviet Union, and eventually the end of the Cold War. Other noteworthy events include the Rwandan Genocide in 1994 (800 000 killed in 100 days[1]), the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986 (sure to trigger conversations and comparisons with the 2011 disaster in Fukushima), the end of Apartheid in South Africa with Nelson Mandela, youths embracing tattoos and piercing, the technology revolution of video games and personal computers (students suddenly become interested here), etc. Musically, despite the feeling of hope in power ballads such as *Wind of Change* by Scorpions, music has a dark, fatalist, sometimes angry flavour to it. Grunge music, featuring Nirvana and songs like *Smells Like Teen Spirit* sets a rather negative tone for this generation of teenagers. Punk music, although not new, makes a short come-back as punk-rock in the United States, thanks to bands like Green Day and their album *Dookie* (1993). Many students enjoy the upbeat tempo and the energy driven by the drums, but as an educator, it is not a simple task to find punk music with lyrics suitable for an educational context. In pop music, Madonna and Michael Jackson continue to dominate the charts, and groups of singers are becoming increasingly popular: The Backstreet

Boys, NSYNC, Destiny's Child, etc.

Jazz

Because of my background as a jazz major, I decided to dedicate a lesson to its history, independently from the timeline of the rest of the course. This favouritism has very little scientific ground, I must admit, but I feel that jazz remains largely unknown even though it played a key role in American history. Unlike other genres, jazz has a significant instrumental facet, and so it has evolved a bit differently than pop and rock music, the main focus of this course. Its rejection of perfection in favour of free individual expression, too, is not always pleasing to the ears of new listeners. Since many students admitted in the music appreciation survey (see annex 1) only listening to the perfectly crafted marketing product that j-pop often is, I felt I should try to engage them into diversifying their musical interests.

Jazz is unlike other genres as it was "made in America". "[…] perhaps more than any other form of art, jazz is driven by an unmistakably American spirit" affirmed Barack Obama at the International Jazz Day concert at the White House in 2016. "It is in so many ways the story of our nation's progress" (Obama, 2016). The history of Jazz is directly connected to the African-American community; "before schools and sports, it was jazz that desegregated [our nation]" adds Obama (2016). Racial discrimination is a theme that is ubiquitous in this course, but jazz brings in a bit of hope. Born in New Orleans, it benefitted from the spreading popularity of the radio to become mainstream. More importantly, this predominantly African-American art became welcomed in many white American households. Popularity of African-American artists such as Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington opened doors until then reserved to white people (Johnson, 2014, p.92). Another example of how jazz can unite people is Dizzy Gillespie's United Nation Orchestra in the 1980s that included musicians from many different countries, including Cuba (during the Cold War!) (Gillespie,

1990). In addition, aware that students are language majors, it seemed evident to present vocal jazz; Billie Holiday, Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, and Tony Bennett to name a few. Students were delighted by Lady Gaga's duos with Tony Bennett. Teachers beware however, some jazz songs use a language that sounds dated today.

Rap / Hip-Hop

The lesson about hip-hop also required stepping back in time in order to cover its history and evolution from the beginning, namely the 1970s. Just like jazz, hip-hop was born in the streets, in predominantly African-American neighbourhoods. If New Orleans gave birth to jazz, then Harlem and the Bronx in New York saw the development of hip-hop, first during block parties, and has been attributed to DJ Kool Herc (Karon, 2000). With lyrics ranging from minimalist to poetic, narrating slices of life or denouncing social inequalities, carefully orchestrated or improvised, its influence on the North American society is indisputable. Its use of the voice to imitate a drum beat, or beatboxing, became a genre in itself and found its way into a cappella groups such as Pentatonix, a favourite among students.

Considered the first commercial success of hip-hop music, the song *Rapper's Delight* from The Sugar Hill Gang is essentially two men talking over a disco beat played on a loop. The word *hip-hop* is heard many times and is used for its rhyme more than for its semantic value.

I said a hip, hop,
The hippie, the hippie,
To the hip, hip hop, and you don't stop, a rock it
To the bang bang boogie, say, up jump the boogie,
To the rhythm of the boogie, the beat.
Now, what you hear is not a test – I'm rappin' to the beat,
And me, the groove, and my friends are gonna try to move your feet.

(The Sugar Hill Gang, 1979)

From there, rap/hip-hop has evolved into many sub-genres and has massively integrated elements of electronic music into their sound (turntables, synthesiser, sampling, etc.) (Toop, 2000). Successful artists include Tupac, Snoop Dogg, Jay-Z, Rakim, etc. Hip-hop has also been the voice of a generation to denounce racism, poverty, class struggle, and other social issues. In popular culture, the TV show The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air (1990–1996) starring a young Will Smith had a primarily African-American cast, mixed rap music with humour, and addressed typical issues that African-American teenagers faced in the United States (Coker, 1996). The show followed in the footsteps of other sitcoms such as The Jeffersons and All in the Family for addressing racism. More recently, the sung-through musical Hamilton has been a major success in the United States and has attracted a lot of attention, teaching the story of founding father Alexander Hamilton and communicating through rap music (Hamilton, 2015). As a modern opera that is a rap battle about 18th century history, not only does it entertain the audience, but it also makes educators reconsider how they teach and connect with their students.

Students' Perceptions

During the last lesson, students were asked to give their opinion on the course in an anonymous survey (see annex 2). The survey was given to four different groups of students, all second or third-year English majors. In total, fifty-two students filled in the survey. The format followed a classic five-level Likert scale, from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, including the middle option *neutral*. If this questionnaire would have to be done again, removing the central *neutral* option would gently push students to choose between a positive or negative answer, although the results to the present questionnaire are quite clear.

The first statement on the questionnaire, *this course was interesting*, triggered

49 students out of 52 (94%) to answer *agree* or *strongly agree*. It can therefore be said that students were on board and engaged with the topics. The third statement, *I enjoyed the mix of music and history*, prompted 51 students (98%) to answer *agree* or *strongly agree*, which supports the idea to combine music and historical events. In fact, 48 students (92%) agreed that (statement 4) *talking about music made learning about history more interesting*. Same results (92%) with the next statement, *music helped me to understand history*. The students' perception is therefore that music contributed to lighten the learning burden that only history would have represented. Item 6, *only history (no music) would have been better*, had 29 students (56%) answering *disagree* or *strongly disagree*. This shows that students recognised that music enhanced the history course. However, it should be noticed that this statement was the most nuanced, and that 13 students (25%) answered *agree* or *strongly agree* (10 answered *neutral*). This means that a quarter of the students might have preferred a more traditional approach to this history course. Possibly some students do not share the same passion as the instructor for some genres of music. Statements 7 and 8 are about improving English and music listening skills. Students have a neutral opinion (48%) about improving their English listening skills, perhaps because they were not formally assessed in this course. On the other hand, 46 students (88%) think they have improved their music listening skills thanks to this course. Lastly, 49 out of 52 students (94%) *agree* or *strongly agree* that they would recommend this class to other students. Overall, a success for the initial objectives that this course had.

At the end of the questionnaire, students were free to write additional comments. Here are some examples, which have been transcribed as written by the students:

"I began to listen to music in North America (Jackson 5 / Can't Take my Eyes Off You) after the class!!"

"These days, I listen "It's my Life" every day."

These comments seem to show that the course did help some students to discover different genres of music and to spark their interest. Other comments include:
"It was easy to understand and interesting for me"
"Thank you, class is interesting"
"I recommend this class for others strongly"
All these positive answers and comments are convincing that the students' experience in this course was enjoyable and successful.

Additional Possibilities

The historical events, artists, and songs mentioned in this article are only a few examples of what can be used in class. Because it is impossible to cover a whole decade of history and music in one lesson, the selection was made considering possible links between content and music. Broadway musicals, for example, could have been used to a greater extent as they have a lot to offer: social and historical contexts, musical influences, plots, song lyrics, etc. Aware that not all students would be thrilled by old-fashioned musicals, I decided to use them scarcely.

Teachers who are not familiar with popular music or "what the young generation is listening to" should not be afraid to experiment in their classroom. A simple search on the Internet can provide the musical examples needed. Neither should anybody be embarrassed to bring an "old song" to class, as students might not have heard classics of the past decades, especially from foreign artists. Alternatively, teachers could make small groups of students and ask each group to be responsible for providing musical examples in relation with a class topic (if possible) each week. While it might not always be easy or even possible to relate the class content to a song, any attempt can enrich a lesson.

Throughout this course, the focus was primarily on content, with little attention to the form of language (grammar, syntax). However, if a teacher judges that students need more explicit language instruction, it would be pos-

sible to dedicate a part of each lesson to language activities, using song lyrics, historical texts, magazine articles, famous speeches, etc. Furthermore, different skills such as note-taking, summarising, retelling stories, essay writing, etc. could be addressed. Content-based education offers many possibilities between language and content, and should be customised around students' needs and interests (Nation, 2010). A focus on content is not an excuse to lecture without consideration for the students' capacity to follow the lesson, claiming to offer an immersion experience. "After decades of research on language acquisition in CLBT in a variety of educational and social contexts, it is clear that language acquisition does not 'take care of itself'", reminds us Patsy Lightbown (2014, p.129). Teachers must keep in mind that both content and language can present challenges for learners. Scaffolding at each step is key, and it is beneficial to pause the lesson to explain the meaning of a word or clarify the content if necessary (Gibbons, 2015).

Conclusion

The aim of this course was to provide a learning environment similar to the one of a regular course in an English-speaking university, simulating a study abroad experience. A content-based approach with a slight focus on language (according to the students' English abilities) seemed the most appropriate way to scaffold students' learning, and the topics of American history combined with American music were thought to be rich in content and interesting. Feedback collected from students at the end of the course (annex 2) were substantially positive in that matter.

Finally, it must be conceded that the success of using music in the classroom depends on how much students enjoy the music. Diversifying musical taste requires time, and teachers should not be discouraged in case of a lack of reaction from the students. Maybe they will not tap their foot or nod their head while listening to music in class, but as seen in the comment section, some of them will

go home and listen to it again. Hetland (2000), while reviewing studies about the Mozart Effect, concluded that results can be greatly influenced by gender, ethnicity, musical preference, training, and spatial ability. Not everybody likes the same music, but if it can be used to improve a lesson, then it should be adopted as a regular practice.

Note

1 *Africa Recovery* (now *Africa Renewal*, a magazine published by the United Nations), August 1998, 12 (1), 4.

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Annex 1 **Music Appreciation Survey** (lesson 1)

1. What's your gender?
2. What kind of music do you enjoy?
3. What kind of music do you dislike?
4. Do you go to live concerts sometimes? Yes / No
5. Which do you pay attention to, the lyrics (words) or the instruments?
6. Do you buy CDs or digital music?
7. Do you play music? Yes / No If yes, which instruments?
8. Does music influence your mood? Yes / No
9. Do you listen to music in English? If yes, give an example. Yes / No
10. Any music recommendation for this course (singer, band, etc.)?

Annex 2 **Music in North America Survey** (last lesson)

n = 52	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. This course was interesting.		2	1	20	**29**
2. I enjoyed learning about American history.		1		25	**26**
3. I enjoyed the mix of music and history.			1	24	**27**
4. Talking about music made learning about history more interesting.		2	2	**26**	22
5. Music helped me to understand history.		2	2	**26**	22
6. Only history (no music) would have been better.	9	**20**	10	10	3
7. In this class, I improved my English listening skills.		1	**25**	20	6
8. In this class, I improved my music listening skills.			6	**26**	20
9. I would recommend other students to take this class.		1	2	23	**26**